



*State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913*

*PH (517) 373.2420 | FAX (517) 373.2764*

*[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/garcia/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/garcia/)*

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Contact: Maleigh Jackson  
517-373-2420

## **Garcia co-sponsors legislation to require permits for protests outside funeral services**

**LANSING**—State Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell, co-sponsored legislation this week that would require protestors outside a public funeral home to receive a permit from the local unit of government prior to demonstrating.

Senate Bill 1199 empowers local units of government to pass an ordinance requiring a permit before a person can demonstrate or protest on public property outside any funeral services. The ordinance would prohibit a protest within 500 feet of a funeral service an hour prior to, during, and two hours immediately following the service.

The measure also permits local governments to charge a reasonable fee for processing the application and issuing a permit. Garcia said it does not ban protests or infringe upon citizens' freedom of speech. Instead it promotes a respectful and considerate atmosphere for grieving families.

“Although all citizens have the right to protest, the manner in which they do so should be respectful to families,” said Garcia. “This legislation does not infringe upon the First Amendment; it simply encourages courtesy to grieving families.”

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